

A Classical Review of Vacha (*Acorus Calamus* Linn.) in Ayurvedic Literature

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Abstract: *Acorus calamus* (Vacha) is an important aromatic medicinal plant widely used in Ayurveda for its diverse therapeutic properties. Vacha has been mentioned since the Vedic period and is extensively described in classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya. The drug possesses Katu Tikta Rasa, Laghu Tikshna Guna, Ushna Veerya and Katu Vipaka, and is mainly Kapha-Vata Shamaka. Vacha exhibits various therapeutic actions such as Medhya, Vāk-varhdhana, Deepana, Pachana, Lekhana and Shiroyrechana. It is widely used in the management of Apasmara, Unmada, Kasa, Shwasa, Agnimandya and Vāk vikara. In Ayurveda, proper knowledge of dravya including its Rasapanchaka, paryaya and karma is essential for effective treatment. Therefore, the present study reviews the classical references of Vacha including its synonyms and their meanings, vernacular names, gana-varga vargeekarana, varieties, Rasapanchaka, rogagnata, and yogas described in Brihatrayi and various Nighantus such as Dhanvantari Nighantu, Raja Nighantu and Bhavaprakasha Nighantu.

Keywords: Vacha, Ayurvedic Literature, Rasapanchaka, Medhya Dravya, Rogagnata.

1. Introduction

Ayurveda is a traditional system of medicine that focuses on maintaining health and managing diseases through natural remedies and healthy living. Its main objective is to preserve the health of the healthy and treat diseases in the diseased. Numerous medicinal plants are described in classical Ayurvedic texts that help achieve this purpose. One such important medicinal drug is Vacha (*Acorus calamus* Linn.), which is widely recognized for its therapeutic importance in Ayurveda.

2. Chronological Review

2.1 Vedic period ^[1]

- 1) In Atharva Parishishta as Vacha 1/44/10, 5/1/5.
- 2) In Samavidhana Brahmanam as Vacha 2/7/10-13.
- 3) In Brahmana Grantha as Vacha 95.
- 4) In Kalpa Sootra as Vacha 391.
- 5) In Kaushika Sootra it is explained as Vasa.

2.2 Samhita period ^{[2]-[3]}

- In Charaka samhita, Vacha is mentioned under Virechana, Lekhana, Arshoghna, Triptighna, Asthapanopaga, Sitaprashamana, Samjnasthapana gana.
- In Sushruta samhita, Vacha is mentioned under Pippalyadi, Vachadi, Mustadi, and Urdwa Prashamana varga.

2.3 Nighantu kala ^[4]

- References regarding Synonyms, Rasa panchaka, karma of Vacha were available in Nighantu period.
- Vacha is considered as Medhya, Deepani, Jeevani by Acharya Kaiyadeva.

3. Paryaya Pada ^[5]

Nirukti

1) Vacha (वचा)

वचा: वक्ति अर्थान् अभिव्यञ्जयति वा वाक्शक्तिं वर्धयतीत्यर्थः। यथोक्तं प्रिय-निघण्टौ –

“वाक्शक्तिर्वर्धते यस्याः सेवनात् वचा तु सा” इति।

The drug is called **Vacha** because it enhances **speech power (Vāk-śakti)** and improves voice.

2) Aruna (अरुणा): अरुणा: अरुणवर्णकन्दा।

Named **Aruna** because the **rhizome is reddish-brown in colour.**

3) Uragandha (उग्रगन्धा): उग्रगन्धा : उग्रस्तिक्ष्णो गन्धोऽस्याः।

It possesses a **strong and penetrating smell.**

4) Ugra (उग्रा): उग्रा: तीक्ष्णा वीर्ये।

Because of its **strong potency (Tikshna veerya).**

5) Karshani (कर्षणी): कर्षणी: कृशयतीति।

So called because it **reduces body weight or causes emaciation.**

6) Golomi (गोलोमी): गोलोमी: गोलोमानिव रोमाणि कन्देऽस्याः।

The rhizome has **hair-like structures on its lower surface.**

7) Jatila (जटिला): जटिला: जटायुक्ता रोमशत्वात्।

Due to the **presence of fibrous or hairy structures.**

8) Lomasha (लोमशा): लोमशा: रोमशकन्दा।

The rhizome is **covered with hair-like structures.**

9) Bodhaneeya (बोधनिया): बोधनिया: संज्ञानाशे संप्रबोधनाय उपयुक्ता।

Used for **arousing consciousness.**

10) Bhootanashani (भूतनाशनी): भूतनाशनी: भूतानि नाशयतीति।

Destroys **disease-causing organisms or evil influences.**

11) Mangalya (मंगल्या): मंगल्या: मंगलाय हिताः।

Considered **auspicious and beneficial.**

12) Vijaya (विजया): विजया: विजयं करोति रोगेषु।

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Helps overcome diseases.

Relieves pain.

13) **Shataparvika (शतपर्विका):** शतपर्विका: शतं बहूनि पर्वाण्यस्याः।

The rhizome contains many nodes or joints.

16) **Smarani (स्मरणी):** स्मरणी: अपस्मृतिं निराकृत्य स्मृतिप्रत्ययनं विधीयतेऽनया।

Helps restore memory and consciousness.

14) **Shadgrantha (षडग्रन्था):** षडग्रन्था: षडधिका: वा ग्रन्थयः कन्देऽस्याः।

The rhizome shows several nodes or knot-like structures.

17) **Rakshoghni (रक्षोग्नी):** रक्षोग्नी: रक्षांसि हन्तीति।

Destroys harmful organisms and protects from diseases.

15) **Shulaghni (शूलघ्नी):** शूलघ्नी: शूलं हन्तीति।

18) **Swaralu (स्वरालु):** स्वरालु: स्वरं वर्धयति।

Improves voice and vocal clarity.

Table 1: Showing synonyms of Vacha ^{[6]-[13]}

Synonyms	B. N	K. N	S. N	R. N	M. N	N. A	D. N	P. N
Aruna	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bhadra	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Bhutanashini	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Bodhaneeya	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Dheera rakta	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Golomi	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-
Haimavathi	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Ikshupatrika	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Jalaja	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Jatila	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-
Karshni	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kshudrapatri	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Lomasha	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
Mangalya	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Rakshoghni	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Shadgrantha	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Shataparva	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-
Shubha	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smarani	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Teekshna gandhika	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
Teekshna patra	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Ugra	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-
Ugra Gandha	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Vaca	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Vachya	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Vijaya	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Yogavati	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

4. Vernacular Names

5. Gana Varga

Table 2: Showing Vernacular names of Acorus calamus. ^[17]

Africans	Kalmoes
Assam	Bach
Bengal	Bach
Burma	Linhe
Canarese	Baje
Deccan	Gandkilakri, Vach
English	Sweet Flag
Gujarathi	Gandhilovaj, Godavaj, Vekhand
Hindi	Bach, Ghorbach, Gorbach
Kashmir	Vahi
Malaya	Cheong Fu
Malayalam	Vashambhu
Marathi	Vekhand
Punjab	Bariboj, Wach
Sanskrit	Vacha.
South Africa	Myrtle Flag, Sweet Sedge.
Tamil	Vashabhu
Telgu	Vadaja, Vasa, Wasa
Urdu	Vach

Table 3: Classification acc. to various authors. ^{[2]-[16]}

Samhita	Gana / Varga
Charaka Samhita	Virechana, Lekhaniya, Arshoghna, Triptighna, Asthapanopaga, Sita prashamana, Samjnasthapana, Tiktaskanda, Shirovirechana.
Sushruta Samhita	Pippalyadi, Vachadi, Mustadi, Urdwa Prashamana.
Bhavaprakasha Nighantu	Haritakyadi varga
Dhanwantari Nighantu	Shatapushpadi Varga
Priya Nighantu	Shatapushpadi Varga
Raja Nighantu	Pippalyadi Varga
Madanadi Nighantu	Madanadi Gana
Saushruta Nighantu	Vachadi Gana
Ashtanga Nighantu	Vachadi Gana
Madanapala Nighantu	Shuntiyadi Varga
Kaiyadeva Nighantu	Aushadhi Varga
Shaligrama Nighantu	Haritakyadi Varga
Shodala Nighantu	Shatapushpadi Varga

6. Bheda / Varetities [1]-[3]

Two types of Vacha have been mentioned in Brihatrayis.

- 1) Vacha
- 2) Shweta vaca

Charakachraya has mentioned about **Haimavati vacha** in 16 moolini dravya as well as in Lekhaniya Maha Kashaya and **Vacha** in rest of gana's.

Acharya Sushruta has mentioned both Haimavathi and Vacha in Mustadi gana (Su.su 38/54). Dalhanacharya has given explanation as ShwetaVacha for Haimavathi.

Table 4: Vacha bheda acc. to Nighantukaras. [5], [8], [11]

Varities	B.P	R.N	D.N
Vacha	+	+	+
Shwetha Vacha	-	+	+
Parasika Vacha / khurasani Vacha / Haimavathi	+	-	-
Mahabhari Vacha / Kulinjana	+	+	-
Sthulagranthi	+	-	-
Dweepantara Vacha / Chopachini	+	-	-

Botanically only 2 varieties of Acorus are used medicinally, one is Acorus calamus, other one is Acorus gramineus. The former one is identified as Vacha and the later one as Haimavathi or Shweta Vacha.

7. Different Varieties of Vacha

Table 5: Showing different varieties of Vacha [5].

Types	Identification	Guna Karma	Remarks
Vacha	Acorus calamus Acoraceae	Medhya, Deepana, Pachana, Swarya	Genuine variety
Shweta Vacha	Acorus gramineus Acoraceae	Medhya, Vrishya, Deepani, Krimighna, Lekhaniya.	Native to Japan
Mahabhari Vacha / kulinjana	Alpinia galangal Zingiberaceae	Kaphahara, Kasahara, Swarakari, Ruchya, Mukha Shodhani	Adulterant. Used as Rasna in South India.
Sthulagranthi	Zingiber zerumbet Zingiberaceae	Kulinjana Bheda, Shwasa-Kasahara, Krimihara.	Less potent than Kulinjana
Dweepantara Vacha	Smilax china Liliaceae	Phirangahara, Deepana, Vibandha Adhmana hara.	Known as Chopachini. Native to China.

8. Rasa Panchaka

Table 6: Showing Rasa panchaka of Vacha [5], [6], [8]-[12]

Nighantu	Rasa	Guna	Veerya & Vipaka	Vipaka	Prabhava
B.N	Katu, Tikta	Teekshna	Ushna	-	-
K.N	Tikta, Katu	-	Ushna	Katu	Medhya
R.N	Katu	Teekshna	Ushna	-	-
M.N	Katu, Tikta	-	Ushna	-	-
N.A	Katu, Tikta	Teekshna	Ushna	Katu	Medhya
D.N	Katu	Rooksha	Ushna	-	Medhya
P.N	Katu, Tikta	-	Ushna	-	Medhya

Vacha is having Katu Tikta Rasa, Teekshna Guna, Ushna Veerya, Katu Vipaka and all Author opined that vacha is having Kapha Vatahara Property.

9. Karma

Table 7: Showing the Karma of Vacha [5]-[9], [11], [12]

Karma	B.N	K.N	S. N	R.N	M.N	D.N	P.N
Medhya	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
Ayushya	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Agni deepana	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
Jeevani	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Kanthya	-	-	+	-	-	+	-
Krimihara	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Malamootra Shodaka	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
Vamaka	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Pachana	-	+	-	-	-	+	-
Rujapaha	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
Vaakprada	-	+	+	-	-	-	+
Swarya	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Hridhya	-	-	-	-	-	+	-

Vacha is having Medhya, Jeevani, Swarya, Hridhya, Vamaka and Pachaka Karma.

10. Rogagnata

Table 8: Showing Rogagnata of Vacha [5]-[9], [11], [12]

Roga	B. N	K. N	S. N	R. N	M. N	D. N	P. N	N. R
Adhmana	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
Apasmara	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-
Atisara	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Granthi	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Kantha roga	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-
Krimi	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
Shopha	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Shula	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-
Unmada	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
Vatajwara	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Vibandha	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
Bhootabhada	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-

Vacha is used in treatment of Apasmara, Unmada, Bhootabada, Kanta roga chikitsa.

11. Yoga

Table 9: Showing yogas of Vacha [2]-[4], [18]-[20].

S. No	Yoga	Phalashruthi	Reference
1.	Brahma Rasayana	Smriti medhavardhaka	C. Chi. 1/253
2.	Chaturtha Triphala Rasayana	Medha smritiprada	C. Chi. 1-3/46-47
3.	Aindri Rasayana	Smriti medhakara	C. Chi. 1-3/24-29
4.	Smritimedhakara yoga	Smriti medhakara	S. Sha. 10/72-73
5.	Mahapaishachika ghrita	Buddhismritikara	S. Chi. 9/45-48
6.	Vacha Rasayana yoga	Smritiman, Shrutadhara	S. Chi. 28/7
7.	Medhavardhaka Vachadi Yoga	Buddhi prada	S. Chi. 28/7
8.	Ashtanga Grita	Medhya Smriti Vardhaka	A.H. U. 1/43

9.	Saraswata Grita	Medhya Smriti Vardhaka	A.H. U. 1/45
10.	Vachadi Grita	Medhya Smriti Vardhaka	A.H. U. 5/19-20
11.	Brahma Rasayana	Medhya	A.H. U. 39/18
12.	Triphala Rasayana	Medhya	A.H. U. 39/2
13.	Medhakara Vacha prayoga	Medhya	A.H. U. 39/164
14.	Guduchyadi Yoga	Smritivardhaka	Y.R. Rasayana
15.	Vidari Grita	Medhya	B. R 35/26-37
16.	Saraswatharishta	Medhya	B.R.73/182-195
17.	Kameshwara Modaka	Medhya	B. R. 74/180-185
18.	Panchagavya Grita	Medhya	Sahastra yoga
19.	Kalyanaka avalchya	Medhya	Chakra 22/20-22

12. Part Used: Kanda (Rhizome)

13. Discussion

The present classical review highlights the significance of Vacha in Ayurvedic literature from the Vedic period to the Nighantu period. References found in classical texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya indicate its long-standing therapeutic importance. The presence of numerous paryaya (synonyms) of Vacha reflects its morphological characteristics, pharmacological actions and therapeutic values described by different Acharyas. Many synonyms such as Smarani, Bodhaneeya, Vacha and Swaralu indicate its role in enhancing memory, intellect and speech, thereby emphasizing its Medhya property. Various Nighantus have also described its Rasapanchaka as Katu-Tikta Rasa, Tikshna Guna, Ushna Veerya and predominantly Kapha-Vatahara in action. Its classification under different gana and varga further supports its wide range of therapeutic uses. Classical formulations like Brahma Rasayana, Saraswata Ghrita and Mahapaishachika Ghrita demonstrate its role in improving smriti, medha and cognitive functions. Thus, the classical descriptions establish Vacha as an important Medhya dravya with broad therapeutic applications.

14. Conclusion

From the classical review it can be concluded that Vacha is an important medicinal plant extensively described in Ayurvedic texts. The drug is mentioned in Vedic literature, Samhitas and various Nighantus with detailed explanations of its synonyms, varieties, Rasapanchaka, karma and therapeutic uses. The large number of synonyms described for Vacha also reflects its diverse pharmacological actions, particularly its Medhya and Vāk-varhdhana properties. Its Kapha-Vatahara, Deepana and Medhya actions make it useful in conditions such as Apasmara, Unmada, Bhootabaddha and Kantha roga. Hence, Vacha holds a significant place in Ayurvedic pharmacology and therapeutics and remains an important drug for enhancing memory and cognitive functions.

Abbreviations:

- 1) Ashtanga Hridaya: A.H
- 2) Bhaishajya Ratnavali: B.R
- 3) Bhavaprakasha Nighantu: B.N
- 4) Charaka Samhita: C.S
- 5) Dhanvantari Nigantu: D.N
- 6) Kaiyadeva Niganthu: K.N

- 7) Madanapala Nigantu: M.N
- 8) Nigantu Adarsha: N.A
- 9) Nighantu Ratnakara: N.R
- 10) Priya Nigantu: P.N
- 11) Raja Nigantu: R.N
- 12) Shaligrama nighantu: S.N
- 13) Shodala Nighantu: Sh.N
- 14) Sushruta Samhita : S.S
- 15) Yoga Ratnakara: Y.R

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